

more than
300,000
copies sold

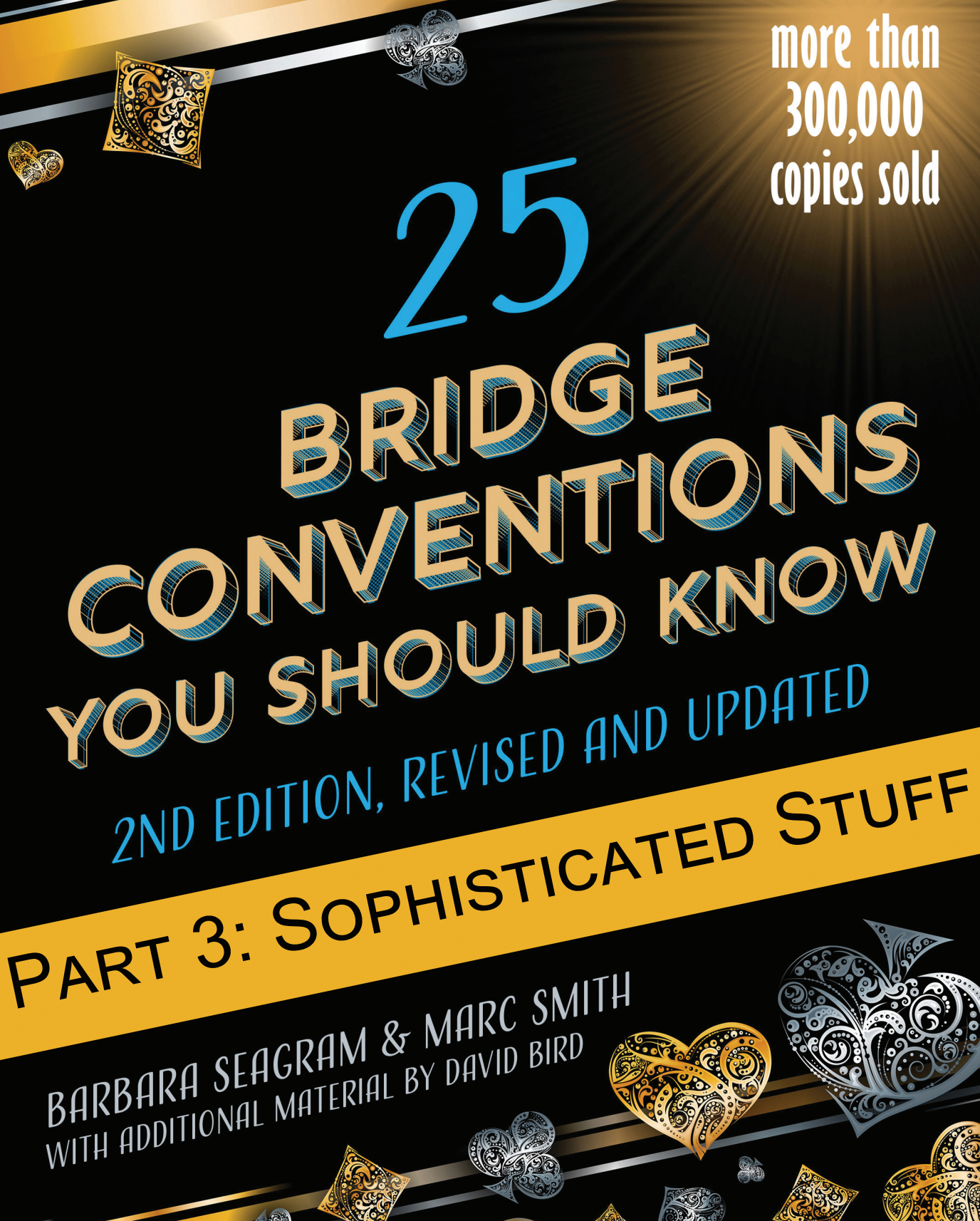
25

BRIDGE
CONVENTIONS
YOU SHOULD KNOW

2ND EDITION, REVISED AND UPDATED

PART 3: SOPHISTICATED STUFF

BARBARA SEAGRAM & MARC SMITH
WITH ADDITIONAL MATERIAL BY DAVID BIRD



© 1999, 2003, 2022 Barbara Seagram, Marc Smith & David Bird
Cover Image © 123RF Stock Photos/lovelycard

All rights reserved. It is illegal to reproduce any portion of this material, except by special arrangement with the publisher. Reproduction of this material without authorization, by any duplication process whatsoever, is a violation of copyright.

Master Point Press
214 Merton St., Suite 205
Toronto, Ontario Canada
M4S 1A6 (647) 956-4933

Email: info@masterpointpress.com

Websites: www.masterpointpress.com
www.teachbridge.com
www.bridgeblogging.com
www.ebooksbridge.com

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Title: 25 bridge conventions you should know part 3/ Barbara Seagram & Marc Smith; with additional material by David Bird.

Other titles: Twenty-five bridge conventions you should know

Names: Seagram, Barbara, author. | Smith, Marc, 1960- author. | Bird, David, 1946- author.

Description: 2nd edition, revised and updated.

ISBN 978-1-77140-590-4 (PDF)

ISBN 978-1-77140-735-9 (HTML)

ISBN 978-1-77140-785-4 (Kindle)

Subjects: LCSH: Contract bridge—Bidding.

Classification: LCC GV1282.4 .S42 2022 | DDC 795.41/52—dc23

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Editor | Ray Lee |
| Cover and Interior design | Olena S. Sullivan |
| Interior format | Sally Sparrow |

To Ray Lee, my editor for so many years. This book, and many of my co-authored books, were his idea and he has worked tirelessly to make them happen, always with gentle encouragement and tremendous support.

Barbara



PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION

Twenty-three years ago, when we first published *25 Bridge Conventions You Should Know*, we did not realize that it would become one of the best-selling bridge books of all time. However, more than 300,000 copies later, in half a dozen different languages, it's hard to argue with that description.

So why revise a book that has been so popular and so successful? Simply put, times have changed, and bridge has changed with them. Bidding, in particular, has changed. And what teachers shared with their students at the end of the twentieth century is in some ways quite different from what happens in the classroom now, well into the twenty-first.

If you own a copy of the first edition, you will find much in these pages that is still familiar. The conventions that are in both editions have simply been updated to reflect modern bidding styles and treatments — the sections on notrump bidding, for example, now reflect the almost universal use of transfers over a 1NT opening. Some conventions have largely fallen into disuse, and have been replaced with others that have become popular, and are now commonly encountered. Remember that even if you don't want to play a particular convention yourself, you may need to be familiar with it if many of your opponents use it.

A final note: David Bird was the co-author of a follow-up book, [25 More Conventions You Should Know](#), and we welcome him as a contributor of three chapters to this new edition of the original book.



FOREWORD TO THE FIRST EDITION

I have just read a good bridge book, a very good bridge book — the one you have in your hands. I don't know whether everyone who writes a foreword reads the book as thoroughly as I have this one, but I did, and you have a treat in store for yourself.

You are about to familiarize yourself with twenty-five of the most popular and useful bidding conventions described succinctly, simply, and clearly — very clearly. Barbara Seagram and Marc Smith, a Canadian and a Brit, an unlikely pairing, have come up with a winner.

My gut feeling is that a reader who knows nothing or next to nothing about the convention being explained will leave the chapter thinking he or she can play the convention. It doesn't get any better than that.

In addition to the clarity of the explanations, and to my mind the most important feature of the book, a review-type quiz follows each chapter which further hammers home the important concepts. The summary of the main points contained in the chapter, which is laid out neatly before each quiz, is the icing on the cake.

I'm a bridge teacher and I'm going to recommend this book to my students. What more can I say other than that by hook or by crook you should make sure your partner also has a copy of this book? It still takes two to tango.

Eddie Kantar




A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

My sincere thanks to an incredible teacher, Michael Davey, who taught me to love this game; to my dear friend and mentor, Eddie Kantar, whose books, friendship and humor have inspired my teaching for over forty years; to Alan LeBendig, the kindest and best friend ever, who was always there to give advice, wisdom and support; and to a great lady, Kate Buckman, who started the Kate Buckman Bridge Studio in Toronto in 1958 and who invited me to work for her in 1975; Kate taught me the magic of running a bridge club. My sincere thanks to all the thousands of students over the years who have been so supportive and have become friends. And last, but not least, my thanks to my husband, Alex Kornel, my soulmate and partner in life and at the table.

Barbara Seagram

I would like to thank my good friend and fellow author, David Bird, with whom I have spent many pleasant hours discussing bridge hands over excellent lunches. Without him, my sentences would probably still be long and tortuous. I would also like to thank all the bridge partners who have patiently suffered my idiosyncracies over the years. A special mention goes to one of the nicest human beings I have ever known, my former partner, the late Peter Czerniewski, without whom my bidding sequences would probably still be long and tortuous. Thanks also to my students, without whom life would probably seem long and tortuous. Better end now before these acknowledgements become, ah, would you believe, long and tortuous.

Marc Smith



C O N T E N T S

Section 1 Learn these first

| | | |
|-----------|------------------------------|----|
| Chapter 1 | Blackwood and Gerber | 3 |
| Chapter 2 | Jacoby and Texas Transfers | 11 |
| Chapter 3 | Stayman 2♣ Response to 1NT | 19 |
| Chapter 4 | Takeout Doubles | 27 |
| Chapter 5 | Weak Two-Bids | 39 |
| Chapter 6 | 2♣ Strong Artificial Opening | 47 |
| Chapter 7 | Reverses | 55 |
| Chapter 8 | Negative Doubles | 61 |

Section 2 More complicated

| | | |
|------------|--|-----|
| Chapter 9 | Roman Keycard Blackwood | 73 |
| Chapter 10 | Jacoby 2NT Forcing Major Raise | 79 |
| Chapter 11 | Splinter Bids | 85 |
| Chapter 12 | Reverse Drury | 91 |
| Chapter 13 | Bergen Raises (<i>by David Bird</i>) | 97 |
| Chapter 14 | Help Suit Game Tries | 107 |
| Chapter 15 | Cuebid Raises | 113 |
| Chapter 16 | Balancing | 119 |
| Chapter 17 | Michaels Cuebids and Unusual NT | 125 |

Section 3 Sophisticated stuff

| | | |
|------------|---|-----|
| Chapter 18 | DONT Defense to a Strong 1NT (<i>by David Bird</i>) | 133 |
| Chapter 19 | Meckwell Defense to 1NT (<i>by David Bird</i>) | 143 |
| Chapter 20 | Control Bids | 151 |
| Chapter 21 | Fourth-Suit Forcing | 159 |
| Chapter 22 | New Minor Forcing | 165 |
| Chapter 23 | Responsive Doubles | 173 |
| Chapter 24 | Lead-Directing Doubles | 181 |
| Chapter 25 | Lebensohl | 187 |

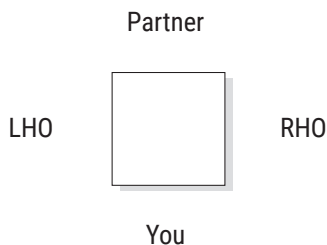


A U T H O R S ' N O T E

The examples in this book are based on Standard bidding. All of the conventions here can be played as part of a 2/1 system, but the meanings of some auctions will be slightly different. Make sure you discuss them with your partner.

In the course of this book, we frequently refer to 'points'. If you are bidding notrump, then this means high-card points (HCP) since you cannot count distribution for notrump purposes. However, when bidding suits, 'points' means total points (HCP + distributional points) unless we specifically say 'HCP'. You can add 1 length point for each card over four, i.e. a five-card suit gives you 1 extra point. If you are going to be dummy, then with three-card support, add 3, 2 or 1 **dummy points** — 3 for a void, 2 for a singleton, 1 for a doubleton. With four-card support, add 5, 3 or 1 dummy points.

The opposition are referred to as LHO (left-hand opponent) and RHO (right-hand opponent). When partner opens the bidding, RHO bids next, then you, followed by LHO, and then partner again. If in doubt, refer to this diagram:



Throughout this book, you will see the terms 'natural' and 'artificial'. Describing a bid as natural means that, for instance, if you bid spades, it shows spades. An artificial (or conventional) bid, on the other hand, is quite different. For example, you might make a conventional club bid, and doing so may say nothing about your club holding. Your bid could show both majors, or ask your partner a question about his hand, or mean something else entirely, but it does not necessarily show the suit you have actually bid — hence the term 'artificial'.

Lastly, since it was used in the first edition, we have used the male pronoun throughout the book, for convenience. At all times you can assume that 'he' means 'he or she'.



SOPHISTICATED STUFF



C H A P T E R

18

DONT DEFENSE TO A STRONG 1NT

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

♥ Devised by *Marty Bergen*, DONT is short for 'Disturb Opponent's NoTrump'. Like Bergen Raises, this convention is based on the Law of Total Tricks — if you can find an eight-card fit you are safe at the two-level, even with fewer high cards than the opponents.

What is the purpose of getting into the auction against a strong 1NT opening? The scoring table is such that a declarer in 1NT, particularly when not vulnerable, rarely ends up with a poor score. Suppose dummy holds a near-bust and declarer goes down two not vulnerable, losing 100. In a matchpoint event there will be plenty of pairs making 110 and 140 the other way. Also, 1NT is a difficult contract to defend. Declarer can see his combined assets. On defense, you and your partner may not discover your best suit until it is too late. So, when you have a bit of shape, there is every incentive to enter the bidding.

Will you go for a big number when the next hand is strong? Occasionally, yes, but some pairs use a double by the 1NT opener's partner for takeout. Even those who do use a penalty double may be scared of picking up an inadequate penalty when they can make a game their way. The odds are in your favor, especially when you are not vulnerable!

When the opponents are playing a strong 1NT, you will rarely hold a hand that justifies a penalty double. Even when you do, the opponents will usually have a playable spot in their longest combined holding. It therefore makes good sense to give the double of 1NT a conventional meaning, and to include it as part of your machinery for attempting to buy the contract yourself. The DONT convention does exactly that.

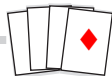
What is DONT?

Playing DONT, when an opponent opens a strong 1NT, you may enter the auction (in either second or fourth seat) with one of these calls:

| | |
|-----|---|
| dbl | a single-suiter somewhere (2♣ asks which suit) |
| 2♣ | clubs and a higher-ranking suit |
| 2♦ | diamonds and a higher-ranking suit |
| 2♥ | hearts and spades |
| 2♠ | six-card spades (weaker hand than via a double) |
| 2NT | the minor suits, at least 5-5 shape |

BY THE WAY

The original meaning of a 2NT overcall was to show a very powerful two-suiter. This method has been in use for many decades but such hands rarely occur, particularly against a strong 1NT. We recommend that you use the 2NT overcall to show a two-suiter in the minors. While the playing strength should be good enough to play at the three-level, the point-count need be no more than for the other overcalls.



with four hearts and five clubs. Remember that your high cards should be located in your long suits.

How many points do you need to take one of these actions? The answer is: not many! The whole idea of the method is to dislodge your opponent from 1NT. Will he be pleased when you enter the auction? Not at all. Every good player expects at least a 65% score when declaring a 1NT contract. By entering the auction you rob him of this pleasure. So, you can enter the bidding with as little as 7 points, although you might have as many as 15. With such a wide range, you may wonder how partner can tell if you can make game your way. This is very unlikely, against a strong 1NT, and in general you should forget about such a prospect unless a good major-suit fit comes to light. The purpose of DONT is not to find games for yourself but to disturb the opponents' 1NT contract whenever you have a bit of shape.

What shape do you need? For the 2♣/2♦/2♥ overcalls, which show two-suiters, you should be at least 5-4, but the suits can be either way round. You might bid 2♣ on a hand with five hearts and four clubs, or on a hand

This a typical hand for the convention:

♠ 10 3 ♥ K J 10 7 5 2 ♦ Q 9 5 ♣ J 3

| | | | |
|------------|----------------|------------|------------|
| LHO | Partner | RHO | You |
| | | 1NT | ? |

You enter with a double, intending to play in 2♥. What if the next player is strong and you end up doubled in 2♥? There is no reason to expect a bad score, at least when you are not vulnerable. You are only at the two-level and the opponents may well have a game their way.

Suppose instead that you hold a two-suiter:

♠ A 10 9 3 ♥ 4 ♦ 8 3 2 ♣ K J 9 7 4

| | | | |
|------------|----------------|------------|------------|
| LHO | Partner | RHO | You |
| | | 1NT | ? |

Here you will bid 2♣ (clubs and a higher suit). You happen to hold five clubs, but you are not promising more than four.

You get the idea, then. You don't need much of a hand to get into the bidding. Let's look next at how the auction may continue after the various possible DONT actions.

How do you bid over partner's DONT double?

When partner doubles, he shows a six-card suit somewhere. If the next player passes you will generally respond 2♣, expecting partner to pass with clubs and to bid his long suit otherwise. Suppose you hold these cards:

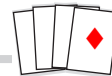
♠ A K 10 4 ♥ K 2 ♦ J 10 9 8 2 ♣ 8 3

| | | | |
|------------|----------------|------------|------------|
| LHO | Partner | RHO | You |
| 1NT | dbl | pass | ? |

The first point to make is that it would be a big gamble to pass. Your partner's double has shown a possibly moderate hand with a six-card suit somewhere. You might defeat 1NT, you might not. Unless you are a professional gambler or thrill seeker, you should choose to play in partner's long suit. You achieve this by responding 2♣. Because you are short in hearts and clubs, you rather expect partner to pass 2♣ or to rebid 2♥. If he surprises you by bidding 2♠, you could suggest a game by raising to 3♠.

BY THE WAY

In the standard version of DONT, you bid 2♠ with a weak six-carder in spades and start with a double on a stronger spade six-carder. However, there are alternative methods available that you may wish to explore.



BY THE WAY

It is possible to modify DONT and use it against a weak 1NT opening. In our view, the lack of a penalty double is a serious drawback against a weak 1NT, and we recommend DONT only for use against strong 1NT openings.



If you have a decent six-card suit of your own, you can often bid it directly:

♠ Q J 6 ♥ A J 10 7 6 2 ♦ 8 5 2 ♣ 7

| | | | |
|------------|----------------|------------|------------|
| LHO | Partner | RHO | You |
| 1NT | dbl | pass | ? |

Here, you would bid 2♥. That's because you expect partner to pass a 2♣ response and you hope that 2♥ will be a better contract. Suppose you held the same hand with the minor suits reversed (one diamond and three clubs). You might then bid 2♣, happy to play in a 6-3 club fit if that turned out to be partner's suit. If he corrected to 2♦, showing six cards opposite your singleton, you could then bid 2♥.

Is it ever wise to pass a double? In bridge you are allowed to do almost anything! If you found yourself with a balanced 15 HCP, you could pass. Don't hold your breath, though, waiting for this to happen!

What if there is a bid over partner's double?

It is an admitted weakness of the DONT defense that you do not identify your suit immediately when you double to show a one-suiter. It doesn't cost you at all when the auction is not contested further, but suppose you encounter this situation:

♠ 10 8 5 2 ♥ K J 6 4 ♦ J 3 ♣ A 8 7

| | | | |
|------------|----------------|------------|------------|
| LHO | Partner | RHO | You |
| 1NT | dbl | 2♠ | ? |

If you were playing natural overcalls and your partner had overcalled 2♣ or 2♥, you would give him a raise. If his overcall had been 2♦ you would not raise. What should you do now, when partner has made a DONT double? The best bet is to ask for partner's suit with a double. If he does happen to have diamonds, it will not be a disaster to play in a 6-2 fit. The general rule is to be aggressive in this situation. Otherwise you will do worse than those who are playing a different method, one without this inherent competitive weakness.

NEWCOMER/INTERMEDIATE

Since its publication in 1999, *25 Bridge Conventions You Should Know* has sold more than 300,000 copies in six languages. It has become a much-valued learning tool and reference for everyone from social players to those who regularly spend time at their local bridge club.

But bridge has changed in the last twenty-odd years. Bidding has changed. Some of the conventions in the original book have fallen into disuse, while others have gained in popularity and importance. Many basic conventions have changed in subtle ways as bidding methods have developed. It is now time, therefore, to update this modern classic so that today's players can be in tune with what is happening and stay current.

This new edition has been thoroughly updated, while retaining the approach and features that made the original so popular. Each convention in the book has been carefully revised to explain its use in the modern game. Students are now universally taught to play transfers in response to a strong notrump opening, and the new edition reflects that change. Three chapters (Landy, Grand Slam Force and Ogust Responses to Weak Twos) have been dropped completely in favor of Bergen Raises and the DONT and Meckwell defenses to 1NT.



BARBARA SEAGRAM (Canada) is one of North America's top bridge teachers, with over thirty books to her credit. *Barbara's Bridge Tips* (MPP) was named Book of the Year in 2021 by the American Bridge Teachers' Association.



MARC SMITH (UK) is a well-known author, a regular contributor to various magazines and a commentator on top bridge events. His most recent book for MPP is a new edition of *Over Hoffman's Shoulder* (with the late Martin Hoffman).



DAVID BIRD (UK) is the most prolific bridge author of all time, having produced over 150 books. Somehow, he still finds time to produce his popular stories featuring the Abbot and the monks of St. Titus, which regularly feature in magazines around the world. His most recent book for MPP is *Play it Safe!* (with Barbara Seagram).



MASTER POINT PRESS